

Evans. (D.W.)

# AN ADDRESS

~TO THE~

MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

Supporting "An Act to Establish a State Board of Medical  
Examiners and Licensers and to Define the Duties  
and Powers of Such Board."



BY THE CAMBRIA COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY.

GENTLEMEN: The Act establishes a Board of Medical Men, and confers upon it the exclusive authority to license individuals to practice medicine in Pennsylvania. Such license can only be granted after the applicants have successfully passed an examination in the different branches of Medical Science.

If all Medical Colleges had a uniform standard of requirements for graduation there would be little need for such an Act. The only question of importance then would be, if the standard was sufficiently high to adequately represent the present advanced position of Medical Science. If it were, a diploma from any college would be a guarantee of a certain degree of proficiency. The public and the profession could then rely upon the attainments of those who are to care for their ills and support the dignity of a noble calling. But the records of the examinations of aspirants for medical honors which have become public, show a ridiculous lack of ordinary common sense among many graduates.

An experience with many legally qualified practitioners would cause an intelligent man to wonder how such ignorance, cupidity, and hypocrisy could possibly find entrance into a learned profession.

Under the present law men who presented bogus medical diplomas have been registered; the peddler of home-made medicines; the "grannies" of ten

years standing; the charlatans who travel from place to place defrauding the public, and men who sign their name with a mark, have all been registered as qualified practitioners of medicine. Such cases prove there is practically no standard of attainments recognized by the law as necessary to enable one to practice medicine. The law has been prostituted to the level of the lowest one of them. All have been received, their passion gratified, and the strong arm of the law protects their ignorance. This state of affairs justifies intelligent men in expressing regret that it can continue, and causes them to look about for a remedy. The public is vitally interested in having the highest grade of intelligence to minister to its wants in the day of sickness and in the hour of emergency, when not a moment can be lost in temporizing, and the lack of knowledge may mean death. One can scarcely conceive how people are satisfied with the blundering ignorance of some so-called doctors, in the management of affairs, which, considered in a temporal sense, are of greater importance than religion, law, business, pleasure, or any of the ordinary events of life. For the public health and the healthy life of the individual are the foundations upon which all human action rests. Indeed, it would not be surprising if the consideration of this aspect of the question through centuries of civilization, had evolved an unalterable conviction in the public mind that those who are to look after their health should be chosen from among the most intelligent; be prepared for their future work from their youth, and rigorously educated in its details with scrupulous care, and then surrounded with a dignity and authority which should make their teachings respected and their rules carried out with fidelity. This may appear extravagant, but if life be worth living, an effort should be made to enjoy all its blessings, and those who can protect it and who spend their time in studying how this end may be attained, are certainly among the most useful of citizens and should be honored accordingly.

The vast extent of medical knowledge and its collateral branches should command the best quality of brain tissue for its study and application to the relief of suffering. We know that many of the Medical Colleges are not concerned in the mental fitness of their students, but the commercial spirit which permeates them, cause their efforts to be expended in securing large classes for the money which flows into the college treasury. It does not seem possible to attain any degree of uniformity among medical colleges as to their requirements for graduation. Some have advanced their standard and are making an honest effort in the direction of higher medical education. But those colleges which are lax in their requirements lag on behind and offer a convenient harbor for ambitious ignorance. The products of all these schools must meet on a common level. The only way to meet this difficulty and attain some measure of uniformity of knowledge among medical men, seems to be for the State to exercise its licensing power through a single board, after the candidates have been subjected to a fair and just examination. Under the present system this licensing power is parceled out to the colleges of the State and each has its own requirements. Under the proposed law there would be a single standard for all to be judged by. It is fair to suppose that the best men in the profession would be selected for the Board of

Examiners, and that they would require all applicants to possess clear, distinct, and practical knowledge of the fundamental facts of medicine before they would license them to practice.

The composition of the Board would not prevent it from making the essential part of the examinations consist in a knowledge of the facts of medicine. Surely there are enough of these beyond the possibility of controversy, to tax the ability of the best minds. The theories and hypotheses which cling to medicine may well be lost sight of in the contemplation of the vast aggregate of truth which is the glory of medical science. All true medical men should be satisfied to know that medical aspirants must be aware of the existence of these truths and appreciate them in a certain degree before they are admitted to the ranks of the profession. No intelligent man will assert that the facts of Anatomy, Physiology, Chemistry, Surgery, or Obstetrics are different when taught in a Homoeopathic or Eclectic College from those taught in a Regular school. All that is contend for is that they should be thoroughly taught in all schools. A broken bone is a fact which medical speculation cannot change. It must be treated in the light of the accumulated experience of centuries, and this is accessible to all. The products of conception will come into the world in the manner provided for from all eternity, irrespective of the theories of Hippocrates, Galen, Watson, Rousseau, Flint, Hanhemann, or Thompson. Its mechanical progress has been studied for centuries, and the laws governing it have been set down. The opportunities for studying them are as free as the air. The public should have the assurance that those who take the lives of women in their hands are qualified for the responsibility. Any objection to an examination in these branches is a confession of weakness.

Any fear of such examination being too carefully conducted, indicates a willingness that the public should be deceived by accepting treatment at the hands of incompetents. If knowledge is power and the people are benefited by it, the refusal to demand it in public men is not only absurd, but a crime against the public good.

This Society supports this Act because it is general in its provisions. It compels all who wish to practice medicine in Pennsylvania, after a certain date, to submit to an examination.

Because it prohibits all who fail to pass this examination from practicing, no matter from what school or university they have been graduated.

Because it is impartial in its provisions and bases the right of a license upon a knowledge of the essential facts of medicine.

Because it does not make the granting of a license contingent upon a belief in the theories and speculations concerning the administration of remedies.

Because it will increase the efficiency of all medical schools, as the ability of the students of a school to pass the examination will be a test of the thoroughness with which they were taught.

Because it will positively exclude from the medical profession the medicine peddlers, the "grannies," the traveling quacks, the "cancer" doctors, and

others of the ignorant mass who feed upon the credulity of the public. After the present lot die off we may hope to be entirely free from these hangers-on.

Because it will protect the public by insuring a definite amount of medical knowledge on the part of the licentiate.

Because it enables the profession to free itself from a certain class of convicted offenders.

Because it is a long step toward higher medical education.

Because it does not recognize sectarians in medicine any more than the present laws do, but it does compel all licentiates to have a definite amount of knowledge of fundamental medical facts.

Because it does not impair the virtue of a diploma, from any school, so far as it is evidence of study, but is simply an additional precaution taken by the State to guard against granting privileges to unworthy persons.

We do not believe any man who is sincerely interested in upholding the profession, in advancing its efficiency and dignity, should object to this Act as it now stands.

In pursuance of these reasons, the following preamble and resolution were adopted at a special meeting held in Johnstown, Pa., January 22, 1889 :

The Cambria County Medical Society being deeply interested in the advancement of the medical profession do hereby heartily endorse the proposed "Act to establish a State Board of Medical Examiners and Licenser and to define the duties and power of such Board." We favor it because it is a temperate, just, and impartial attempt to establish a uniform standard of medical knowledge, which must be possessed by an individual to entitle him to a license to practice medicine. We believe the general effect of this will be to bring about a more thorough and exact study of the facts of medical science and thus increase the knowledge and usefulness of the medical profession.

*Resolved*, That the Representatives of Cambria County in the General Assembly are hereby earnestly requested to vote for and use their influence to secure the speedy passage of the Act in its present form.

GEO. W. WAGONER, M. D.,

Secretary.

D. W. EVANS, M. D., ✓

President.

